

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

Central Asian Seminar
Institute of Asian and African Studies



Tibet & Himalaya Lecture Series

Decolonising Himalayan Studies?
- Putting Theory into Practice -

8.11.21

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Monday
6.15 CET

Decolonizing Tibetan Studies: Empire, Ethnicity, and Rethinking Sovereignty

The influence of the Orientalist representations of Tibet and their connections to imperial projects in Asia has been widely acknowledged. Tibetan Studies as a field itself came as a result of Western imperialism, rather than an adjacent product of it. As a result, representations of Tibetans cannot be divorced from the imperial agendas that generated them at the time. In this presentation, I argue that this emphasis in early Tibetan Studies set a precedent for sidelining Tibetan sovereignty as a central concern in both scholarship and in real world politics, a trend which continues to impact the field and Tibetan lives today. An alternative framing of the history of the field that centers sovereignty through Tibetan frameworks offer Tibetan Studies an avenue for centering the development of Tibet through their own making. Doing so allows for Tibetan Studies scholars to recognize the making of Tibetans from sovereign subjects into refugeeed and colonized subjects who are impacted by state-mandated settler colonial, imperial, and nation-building developments, and how Tibetans meet such impending challenges with their own sovereignty-making projects. My focus in this presentation is on the social sciences—anthropology, geography, and political science—and the development of Tibetan Studies in the USA. That said, my analytic eye is also turned to Buddhist and literary studies and to scholarship produced in Asia and Europe, and many of the arguments I make here are also applicable in those domains.

Register for Zoom Link
<https://hu-berlin.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5cru6hrzkjHNIPeTxwYcvC61Ux0sf-DIhn>

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